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RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 0323  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MADRID 002281

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SUBJECT: SPAIN: FM MORATINOS ON MIDEAST, NORTH AFRICA,  
LATIN AMERICA AND MIGRATION

REF: EUR/WE E-MAIL OF 09/08/2006

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Classified By: Amb. Eduardo A. Aguirre Jr. for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: During his trip to Ronda in southern Spain's Andalucia region, Ambassador Aguirre spent the afternoon and evening of September 9 with Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos. Ambassador pressed Moratinos on recent incendiary comments from President Zapatero regarding Iraq, and he raised the pending sale of patrol boats to Venezuela. Outside the confines of the capital, Moratinos spoke candidly about several issues, voicing pessimism about progress on Iran and Syria and expressing confidence in his position within the GOS. He indicated that Spain's top foreign policy priorities are the Middle East, North Africa (Western Sahara and the Moroccan bilateral relationship), and the continuing issue of illegal immigration from Sub-Saharan Africa. Moratinos also touched on the recent shakeup in his ministry with the addition of Trini Jimenez at the deputy minister level, saying that he expected Deputy FM Bernardino Leon's influence would not be adversely impacted and Leon would retain direct control of relations with the U.S., Cuba and Bolivia, three key foreign policy issues for Spain. In a September 11 telcon with Ambassador, Leon expressed the same sentiment. END SUMMARY.

//IRAN, SYRIA, LEBANON//

12. (C) Moratinos asked whether Ambassador had seen his letter to Secretary Rice on the Middle East/Iran (faxed from Spanish Embassy Washington to EUR/WE on September 8) and said he hoped he would have the chance to follow up with the Secretary at UNGA. Ambassador promised to check on the

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Secretary's reply.

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13. (C) Moratinos expressed pessimism on Iran, and he is increasingly inclined to view the issue as a global crisis. He said that a solution to Iran's nuclear ambitions may be beyond reach. Moratinos told Ambassador that the recent visit by Iranian nuclear negotiator Ali Lariyani came at Iran's request. According to Moratinos, President Zapatero agreed to the visit warily, and his meeting with Lariyani was nothing more than an exchange of pleasantries. NOTE:

Embassy will report septel on Spain's Iran activism. END  
NOTE.

14. (C) Regarding the recent trip to Iran of former Spanish President Felipe Gonzalez, Moratinos said that no one in the GOS had asked him to go, although they did not object when Gonzalez notified them of his intended travel. Moratinos expressed disappointment in Gonzalez' comments in Iran, saying that there was no value added, but perhaps some value lost. NOTE: In his remarks, Gonzalez went well beyond the current Western position on Iran, stating that the current crisis was an opportunity for engagement and defending Iran's right to nonmilitary nuclear development. END NOTE.

15. (C) Ambassador, drawing on ref points, asked Moratinos for Spain's help in ensuring that Hizbollah not be allowed to rearm, that the Syrian-Lebanese border be tightly monitored, and that Syria be held accountable for any re-supply of Hizbollah. Moratinos said that he was of the same mind. Moratinos also noted that Spain's presence in Lebanon was critical and was evidence of their unwavering commitment to a solution in the Middle East.

//ZAPATERO OFF MESSAGE//

16. (C) Ambassador took the opportunity to raise the recent controversial comments made by President Zapatero in a September 8 interview in Germany, in which the Spanish President seemed to go out of his way to blame international terrorism on the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Ambassador told Moratinos that his understanding was that the GOS was going to put Iraq in the past in the interest of the bilateral relationship. Ambassador said that he had chosen not to respond to these particular remarks, part of what has been an ongoing nuisance. However, if the Government of Spain wished to continue with its rhetorical barbs, then the Ambassador would oblige. Moratinos responded that he too was perturbed by Zapatero's comments and spoke with the President after the interview. He stated his belief that Zapatero would refrain from such statements in the future. NOTE: In his September

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11 address at the ASEM summit in Helsinki, Zapatero took a more restrained approach and focused not on the United States but on the global crisis of international terrorism. END NOTE.

//MIGRATION: NO HELP FROM WEST AFRICA//

17. (C) On illegal immigration, Moratinos expressed great frustration. He noted that Spain's diplomatic efforts in West Africa are yielding little tangible results, and he singled out Senegal in particular as a country that agreed to cooperate (after a visit by VP Fernandez de la Vega) but has done little. Ambassador only half-jokingly noted that there are four warships currently under construction in Spain that could be used for patrolling the West African coast if the sale to Venezuela were to be canceled. COMMENT: A recent poll showed a four percent drop in President Zapatero's approval rating since July, with illegal immigration as the leading issue of concern. The Zapatero government appears to be at somewhat of a loss for how to handle the situation, and it is having difficulty making the issue a top priority in the European Union. END COMMENT.

//BOLIVIA AND CUBA//

18. (C) Moratinos opined that Evo Morales was not fully in charge in Bolivia and that he was saying one thing and doing another. Moratinos said Spain is having minimal success establishing credibility and traction with the Morales government, noting that while Morales has tried to assuage Spanish concerns about their hydrocarbon interests, people in his own government do not appear to be under his control. Moratinos views Bolivian Vice President Alvaro Marcelo Garcia Linera as the real power in La Paz.

¶9. (C) On Cuba, Moratinos said that Deputy Minister Bernardino Leon is in Cuba now and could provide Ambassador with a readout upon his return. Ambassador reminded Moratinos that the United States is still interested in a joint statement on Cuba. Moratinos replied that the planned meeting in New York with A/S Shannon will be a good opportunity to discuss the situation frankly.

//FEELING GOOD//

¶10. (C) Moratinos told the Ambassador that he feels very confident about his position in the GOS and that what he called recent Spanish foreign policy "successes" have empowered him to continue pursuing an aggressive agenda. He also told Ambassador that the recent addition of PSOE foreign policy advisor Trinidad Jimenez as Secretary of State for Iberoamerica was not intended to reduce the influence of current Secretary of State for Foreign Policy Bernardino Leon. Rather, the move frees up Leon to truly act as a deputy with oversight throughout the ministry, and Leon will still hold the Bolivia, Cuba and United States accounts. During a September 11 telcon, Leon told Ambassador much the same. Leon said his travel load will likely not change in the immediate future, though presumably Jimenez will do more traveling once she is up to speed.

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